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LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS

KAREN A. YARBROUGH
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
7TH DISTRICT

Fax transmittal

To: STB

Fax: 2022450454

Re:

Date: 12/5/2007

CC:

Pages: 2 (including cover)

☐ Urgent

☒ For Review

☐ Please Comment

☐ Please Reply

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Notes:

(Finance Docket # 35087)

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KAREN A. YARBROUGH
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
7TH DISTRICT

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COMMUNITY SAFETY & REENTRY
WORKING GROUP

December 5, 2007

The Honorable Vernon A. Williams
Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
395 E Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20423

Subject: *Canadian National Railway Co., et al - Control - EJ&E
West Company, STB Finance Docket No. 35087*

Dear Secretary Williams:

I represent the 7th Illinois State Representative District and have done so since 2000. My district includes a small part of the City of Chicago, the western suburbs of Maywood, Bellwood, Broadview, Forest Park and Hillside, and portions of Oak Park, River Forest, Westchester and Melrose Park. The District includes a number of rail lines, including the lines of Canadian National Railway Company's US subsidiaries.

I strongly support the proposal by Canadian National Railway Company (CN) to acquire control over the EJ&E West Company. This transaction will improve rail service through the Chicago metropolitan area and help the proponents of Project CREATE accomplish their Number One objective - minimize rail congestion in the Chicago rail corridors. I understand the STB will conduct an environmental review of the transaction. I urge the Board to complete this review and approve the proposed transaction as quickly as possible.

The rail lines in my district include a freight line used by CN which runs through a residential area and upon which trains frequently idle awaiting clearance to move through the City of Chicago and a line which passes near a major metropolitan hospital facility where an at-grade crossing is often blocked, again due to congestion in and through the City of Chicago. I have been informed that the transaction will substantially reduce train traffic over these lines from the current level of about 8 trains per day to 0 trains per day on one segment and 4 trains to 3 trains on another segment.

For many years now, I have received complaints from my constituents, and residents of areas adjacent to my district, regarding the environmental impact of the trains running through the District and idling at various locations. For example, one area in my District encompasses both the Eisenhower Expressway (highly congested during rush hours and busy throughout the day) and a rail line frequently used by CN and also a popular idling location for its trains. The area is thus negatively impacted by the cumulative exhaust from automobiles, trucks and diesel locomotives. While I commend the railroad for its efforts to minimize the impact of idling on neighboring homes, the fact remains that Chicago is the rail

hub of the nation. Trains must idle somewhere to await passage through this area. Any progress in spreading that traffic throughout the metropolitan area can only have a positive impact on the overall environmental health of my district and others.

I recognize the end result of this transaction is that communities along the EJ&E will experience train traffic increases and that the STB will consider these impacts in its Environmental Impact Statement. I have been told by CN that it is reaching out to those communities to identify these issues and to assist these communities in addressing them as appropriate. However, the residents of the City of Chicago and its near suburbs have struggled with the dilemma of being part of the nation's rail hub and the positive benefits that creates but, at the same time, being captive to an outdated rail infrastructure system and strangled by the overwhelming congestion this causes. It is my opinion that the localized impact on the communities along the EJ&E can not possibly outweigh the significant overall environmental benefits of this transaction on the region as a whole, the transportation benefits this transaction will create for shippers in Illinois and around the country and the positive safety ramifications of eliminating traffic through at-grade crossings with extremely high average daily traffic counts.

In sum, I strongly support this transaction and the positive role it will play in reducing environmental impacts within my district, including air emissions, noise and grade crossing delays. I am optimistic that removal of trains from rail lines through the City of Chicago will reduce transit times for traffic moving through the Chicago gateway on CN as well as other railroads. This can only result in a positive impact on the national transportation system and I trust, in this day of heightening concern for energy use, a reduction in diesel fuel consumption. I urge the Board to complete its environmental review process expeditiously and to approve this transaction so the residents of the 7th District, as well as shippers from around the State and Nation, can begin to appreciate the benefits it will bring.

I request that you please enter these comments into the record of this docket.

Sincerely,


Representative Karen A. Yarbrough
Illinois House of Representatives